

These figures give the following percentages:—

—			Eleven Months ended 31st March, 1941.	Eleven Months ended 31st March, 1940.
			Per Cent.	Per Cent.
Californian	..	..	12·43	22·04
Australian	..	..	8·64	19·46
New Zealand	..	..	78·93	58·50

Present estimates indicate that the coming season's New Zealand crop will be higher than for the twelve months passed, further reducing the necessity for imports. Small quantities of lemons will also be arriving from the Cook Islands this year, and these will be regulated and sold in conjunction with the New Zealand crop.

APPLES AND PEARS.

Following on the Government's agreement with the fruit industry for Government purchase of the Dominion apple and pear crop (fuller details of which were published in last year's annual report), the Division had only a few weeks in which to organize what has proved to be the biggest change over that has occurred within the fruit industry of this country. It was fortunate that the past statistics and experience of the Fruit-export Control Board and its staff were available, as this enabled the introduction of the new scheme at an early date with the minimum amount of inconvenience to growers and traders. However, the new scheme embraced marketing and assembly operations much beyond the scope of the export trade of past years. It was therefore disappointing to find that fruit-traders were unable to supply statistics indicating the consuming capacity or market preferences of the Dominion markets.

Previous investigations revealed that fruit marketing conditions within the Dominion left much to be desired, but before introducing major changes in any direction it was deemed desirable for the Division to afford existing organizations the opportunity of expanding their facilities to cope with the emergency conditions. With this co-operation it should be possible to adjust some of the present marketing defects and at the same time accumulate statistics and other information which would be most useful if and when further changes are being considered.

CROP ESTIMATES AND QUALITY.

Crop forecasts giving variety quantities and maturity periods are vital factors in arranging a forward programme for fruit storage and marketing. The Department of Agriculture gave this service by supplying a monthly revision of estimates for each district, and in addition reported on the quality of fruit to be harvested.

In the main, the fruit was of fair keeping-quality, the main exceptions being Sturmers from the Nelson and Marlborough districts, which during cool storage developed flesh collapse and caused a certain amount of loss, and Auckland Delicious, which were affected with mouldy core.

Grade percentages for the season were above average, as will be seen from the following table, which gives the grade percentages used in the compilation of the purchase-price schedule in comparison with the grade percentages experienced during 1940.

The groups mentioned in this comparison refer to the groups of varieties of the purchase schedule.

			Percentages of Purchase Schedule.			Percentages of 1940 Crop.		
			XF.	F.	C.	XF.	F.	C.
Apples—								
Group 1	..	..	30	40	30	49·8	31·0	19·2
Group 2	..	..	35	45	20	50·5	33·5	16·0
Group 3	..	..	35	45	20	48·3	29·0	22·7
Pears—								
Group 1	..	..	..	70	30	..	71·5	28·5
Group 2	..	..	..	70	30	..	71·4	28·6

As the keynote of the scheme was maintenance of standard quality, the Division, in conjunction with officers of the Horticultural Division, aimed to maintain quality from time of purchase until final sale to the consumer. It was recognized that only through the supply of sound fruit would it be possible to retain the consumer's demand and so dispose of the heavy stocks available. One of the dangers that had to be rigidly guarded against was the receipt of overmature fruit from growers. This danger is always a very real one, especially as there is a tendency for some shopkeepers to buy in advance of their immediate requirements. It is difficult to suggest how this forward buying can best be controlled, but unless there is strict supervision of the quality of fruit retailed to the public it is highly probable that the sale to the public of faulty fruit may unfairly react against the general scheme of Government marketing.